PART ONE SUTA NARRATES THE DIVINE TALES OF LINGA PURANA

Once, sage, Narada arrived at Naimisharanya where he found many sages engaged in austerities. All the sages were delighted to see him. They eulogized him in reverence and offered him seat. Sage Narada narrated some amazing tales describing about the greatness of Linga Purana. This made the sages even more curious about Linga Purana. Right then, Suta also arrived there and the sages requested him to narrate the tales of Linga Purana.

After making salutations to lord Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh and Sage Krishna Dwaipayan, Suta said--- Sound is the medium through which the almighty Brahma manifests himself. Brahma manifests himself in the sacrosanct OMKAR mantra. Rigveda is his mouth, Samaveda his tongue, Yajurveda his neck and Atharvaveda is his heart. He is the Supreme Being and is beyond the reach of creation or deluge. He is one but manifests himself as three distinct deities--- Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra. These three deities are the expression of the three natural qualities respectively-Rajas, Satva and Tamas. He manifests himself as Mahesh in his formless (Nirguna) identity. He manifests himself in all the living creatures as well as imperceptible things in the form of seven natural elements-Mahattatva (5 basic elements) Ahankara (ego), Shabda (Sound) Sparsh (touch), Roop (appearance), Rasa (taste) and Gandha (smell).

Lord Brahma compiled the divine tales of Linga Purana. It covers wide range of subjects like the beginning of creation, the origin of universe, description of the time, tales of different Kalpas, the greatness of Linga and its worship, tales related with Lord Shiva, characteristics of Shiva temple etc. It specially elaborates upon the greatness of Shivalinga and its worship.

FIRST CANTO PRATHAM SARG

Shiva is both invisible as well as the root cause of all the delusions of the world. This is why Shiva is also known as Alinga (unknowable). Linga is nothing but the non-manifested (Auyakta) form of Shiva. This implies that the visible world is the medium through which Shiva manifests himself. Nature (Prakriti) in itself is devoid of qualities like smell, taste, touch etc. But, all these

qualities become apparent in it only because of Shiva, who is imperishable and whose characteristics are the natural qualities like taste, smell, touch and sound.

The whole world along with the gross and subtle has originated from Alinga Shiva. The whole world comes into being with the help of eleven components-10 sense organs and mind. It is pervaded by the delusions of 'Alinga Shiva'. The three prominent deities—Brahma Vishnu and Mahesh are the manifestations of Shiva. He is the creator in the form of Brahma, the nurturer in the form of Vishnu and the annihilator in the form of Mahesh.

Nature is pervaded by the delusion of Shiva, which is also known as Aja (unborn). The three basic colors -red, white and black are the symbolic expressions of the three qualities Raja, Sat and Tamo respectively. Majorities of people fall prey to the delusions of this world and get entangled in its illusionary appearances, but there are few that understand the futility of this illusionary world.

With the desire of beginning creation, the supreme Almighty manifest himself in the imperceptible which results into the creation of the Mahattatva (five basic elements). From Mahattatva manifests the ego or 'ahankara which comprises of three gunas. From Ego manifests the Tanmantras or subtle forms of matter-sound, form, taste smell and touch. Among these subtle forms of matter, Sound came into being first of all and space originated from it. The second tanmantra, touch originated from the space. Air manifested from touch or sparsh. The third tanmantra, form or roopa originated from air or Yayu. Fire or Agni manifested from roopa. The fourth tanmantra, taste or rasa manifested

from Agni.

Similarly, water or Jal manifested from Rasa, smell or Gandha from Jal and Earth manifested from Gandha respectively.

All the five organs of action (Karmendriya) sense organs and mind originated from pure Ego (Satva ahankara). In course of time all these elements got transformed into a mammoth egg (Anda), inside which Lord Brahma manifested himself. The whole universe is said to be established inside the above mentioned egg.

The egg is covered by seven layers and Lord Brahma dwells inside it, seated on a lotus flower. The mammoth egg contains crores of universes inside its fold.

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THE BEGINNING OF CREATION

The whole creation lasts for the total period equivalent to Brahma's day. The almighty God created during daytime and annihilated during night.

One day of Lord Brahma is equivalent to one Kalpa of this world. The cycle of four yugas occur periodically for 1000 times, during which period altogether fourteen Manus take incarnation, one after another. Satya Yuga consists of 4000 years.

Fifteen Nimesha make one Kashtha (unit of time measurement) Thirty Kalas make a Muhurta, fifteen Muhurta a day and night each. The dark lunar phase is said to be the day, while bright lunar phase is said to be the night of the manes. One year of this world consists of 360 days. The deities' day lasts for the full period, when the sun is positioned towards the north of equator. Similarly, the deities' night lasts for the total period when the sun is positioned towards the south of equator. One year of the deities is equivalent to thirty years of this world. Similarly three months of the deities are equivalent to one hundred months of this world.

Each of the four yugas is measured on the basis of divine years. Satya Yuga is equivalent to 40,000 divine years, while Treta Yuga is equivalent to 80,000 divine years. Dwarpar Yuga is equivalent to 20,000 years of the deities, while Kali Yuga is equivalent to 60,000 years of the deities. The period of each yuga given here is exclusive of the periods of Sandhya (evening) and Sandhyansh (part of evening.)

Lord Brahma commences creation at the fag end of night and all his creations exist for the whole day. When the night descends, everything is annihilated. This is the time when Kalpa ends.

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THE ORIGIN OF CREATION

In the initial phase of his creation, Lord Brahma created immovable natural things like trees, mountains etc-then birds and animals. In the

process of creation, he created various things and human being was his seventh creation.

First of all Lord Brahma created his Manasputras- Sanak, Sanandan etc, who had no worldly desires. He then created the nine supreme sages—Marichi, Bhrigu, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Daksha, Atri and Vashishtha by the help of his yogic powers. After that, it was the turn of the twelve Prajapatis-Ribhu, Sanatkumar, Sanatan etc. All of them were divine, extremely virtuous and had realized the supreme - self, Brahma.Shatarupa had begotten four children from Swayambhuva Manu-Priyavrata, Uttanpad, Akuti and Prasuti.

Akuti was married to a Prajapati named Ruchi, while Prasuti married Daksha. Akuti gave birth to two children- Dakshaina and Yagya. Dakshaina had twelve sons. Prasuti, the youngest daughter of Shatarupa had begotten twenty four daughters from Yaksha-Shradha, Lakshmi, Dhriti, Tushti, Pushti, Megha, Kriya, Buddhi, Lajja, Vapu, Siddhi, Keerti, Khyati, Sambhuti, Smriti, Preeti, Kshama, Sannati, Anusuya, Urja, Swaha, Sura Arani and Swadha. Thirteen of them were married to Dharma, a Prajapati. Khyati was married to sage Bhrigu while Arani married sage Bhargava. Similarly various sages like Marichi, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Ritu, Atri and Vashishtha got married with Sambhuti, Smriti, Preeti, Kshama, Sannati Anusuya and Urja respectively. Swaha was married to Vibhavasu while Swadha married the Pitrishwaras.

Dharma had begotten all together 15 sons from his thirteen wives- Kam, Darp, Niyam, Santosh, Alobha, Shrut, Dand, Samay, Bodi, Mahadyuti, Apramadd, Vinay, Vyavasay, Kshem, Sukh and Yash. Khyati, wife of sage Bhrigu gave birth to Sri who later became the consort of lord Vishnu. She also had two sons named Dhata and Vidhata.

Prabhuti, wife of sage Marichi gave birth to two sons- Puranama and Marich. She also had four daughters- Tushti, Drishti, Krishi and Apachi. Kshama, wife of Sage Pulaha had many offspring among whom Kardam and Sahishnu were prominent. Preeti, wife of Sage Pulastya had two sons named Dattarnavr and Dahvahu. She also had a daughter named Dwashdwati. Kratu's wife, Sannati had six thousand offspring who became famous as Balkhilyas.

Smriti, wife of Sage Angiras had given birth to five daughters— Sini, Vali, Kuhu, Raka and Anumati. Anusuya, wife of Sage Atri had six children-five sons and one daughter. The names of the sons were - Satyanetra, Bhavyamuni, Murtiray, Shanaishchar and Somatha. Urja, wife of sage Vashishtha gave birth to seven sons- Jyayji, Pundarikaksh, Raj, Suhotra, Bahu, Nishpap, Shravana, Tapasvi and Shukra. Agni's consort Swaha gave birth to three sons- Pavaman, Pavak and Shuchi.

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LORD SHIVA - THE SUPREME LIBERATOR

Sati, daughter of Daksha had married lord Shiva much against the wish of her father. Once, Daksha organized a grand yagya in which he did not

invite his son-in-law. Sati went to attend the yagya ceremony inspite of Shiva's forbiddance. After seeing her, Daksha calumniated Lord Shiva and made fun of him. This infuriated her to such an extent that she gave up her life by jumping into the sacrificial fire. She was bom as Parvati in her next birth and once again got Shiva as her husband.

Once, Lord Brahma requested Shiva to create a world, which was free from death. Lord Shiva refused apprehending its disastrous consequences. Lord Brahma was left with no other option than to commence creation on his own. Meanwhile, Shiva became immovable just like the trunk of a tree (sthanu). Lord Shiva, who is capable of attaining any form. He showers benediction on mankind. He is engrossed in the supreme state of Yoga with effortless case. Nobody can attain liberation without his grace. He is the bestower of religiousness (Dharma), knowledge (Jnana), asceticism (Vairagya) and splendour (Aishwarya). Sinners who do not take refuge in Shiva have to experiences the unbearable tortures of countless hells.

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INCARNATIONS OF MANU AND VYASA

On being asked about the incarnation of Sage Vyasa during various eras and Manvantars, Suta replied- O Brahmin! Now I am going to mention

the names of all the incarnations of Vyasa who existed during Vaivasvat manvantar of Varaha kalpa. The names are as follows- Ritu, Satya, Bhargava, Angira, Savita, Mrityu, Shatakratu, Vashishtha, Saraswat, Tridhatma, Trivrit, Swayam, Dharm, Narayan, Tarakshu, Aruni, Kritanjay, Trina, Bindu, Ruksha, Muni, Shakti, Parashar, Jatukarnya and Sri Krishna Dwaipayan.

The names of Manu's belonging to different manvantars of Varaha kalpa are- Swayambhu, Swarochi's, Uttam, Tamas, Raivat, Chakchhus, Vaivaswat, Savarni, Dharmasavarni, Vishang, Avishang, Shabal and Varnak. All of these Manu's were named according to their appearances and complexions. For example vaivaswat Manu was of dark complexion.

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THE ESSENCE OF YOGA

Yoga means union with God. The state of yoga is impossible to attain without the blessings of Lord Shiva. It needs a concentrated and focussed

mind. There are some specific spots in the human body concentrating upon which, enables a man to attain the state of yoga-spot between the eyebrows, lower part of the throat, navel and six inches above it etc.

The state of yoga can never be attained until and unless a person has fully controlled the tendencies of sense organs. It can be achieved with the help of eight means- Yama (penance), Niyam (discipline), Asan (posture), Pranayama (breath-control), Pratyahar (restraint of passion), Dharan (retention), Dhyan (concentration) and Samadhi (deep meditation). Each of them holds an important position in the path of yoga.

Describing about the methods of performing yoga, Suta says— A person should sit with his legs crossed in Padmasan and try to concentrate his mind by fixing his gaze between his eyebrows. He should keep his spine erect. He should meditate either on the form of Omkar or on the form of lord Shiva. Breath control is an important aspect of yogic exercise. A man should exhale deeply for 32 times and then breathe in deeply. He should then retain his breath as long as possible and visualize lord Shiva within his body. By constant practice he will achieve mastery over this art and a time will come when he will experience divine bliss. This divine bliss can not be experienced unless one has attained a deep state of meditation (Samadhi).

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OBSTACLES IN THE PATH OF YOGA

A man experiences numerous obstacles in the path of Yoga-laziness, restlessness confusion, a diseased body etc. The main reason for being

lazy is a bulky physique and one's inability to concentrate his mind. Lack of concentration results in restlessness, which is a major obstacle in the path of yoga. If a person in unsure about the results he becomes confused. It is impossible for a person suffering from any disease to concentrate his mind.

All the above mentioned hurdles can be overcome by firm resolution. A man who has successfully overcome all these obstacles might experience other obstacles in the form of siddhis (divine powers). There is a real danger of getting lured by these divine powers. As a result his mind may get distracted from his original goal and he may deviate from his path. The names of these siddhis or divine powers are-Pratibha (having knowledge of past present and future incident), Shravana (being capable of listening to abnormal sounds), Varta (whatever is said becomes true), Darshana (capable of seeing things which can mot be seen by the mortal eyes), Aswada (being capable of experiencing divine (tastes), Vedana (being capable of relieving other's pain by a mere touch). If a person successfully overcomes all these allurements then he becomes a siddha- or man of accomplishment and divine powers.

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REALISATION OF SHIVA

Lord Shiva showers his blessing on one and all without any discrimination, but virtuous people have special privilege in the sense

that it is easier for them to realize Lord Shiva. Once, Parvati asked Lord Shiva as to how a devotee could realize him. Lord Shiva recalled an incident when Lord Brahma had asked the same question. Lord Shiva had told lord Brahma-"Anybody can realize me by having deep devotion towards me. A devotee can meditate upon me in the form of Linga with total devotion. It is only by deep devotion that a man can achieve true knowledge as well as salvation."

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VENERABLENESS OF SADYOJAT

The sages asked Suta as to how was lord Brahma able to have a divine glimpse of Sadyojat. Suta replied- During the Kalpa named Shwetalohit,

once lord Brahma witnessed the manifestation of a divine child who was of mixed (red and white) complexion. The child had a Shikha (topknot) on his head. Considering him to be an embodiment of almighty God, Lord Brahma eulogized that child. Suddenly four children appeared and formed a protective ring around Sadyojat. The names of these children were- Sunand, Nandan, Vishwanand, and Upanand. All of them were of fair complexion and very handsome.Anybody who is desirous of attaining to Rudraloka must take refuge in Sadyojat.

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LORD VAMDEV

Once, during thirtieth kalpa named Rakta, Lord Brahma was meditating on Paramaeshthi Shiva. Suddenly a divine child appeared before him who

was of red complexion and who had put on red apparels. He was none other than Lord Vamdev. Lord Brahma immediately realized the divinity of that child and was convinced that he was the embodiment of Almighty God.

Lord Brahma eulogized Vamdev who was pleased by his devotions. Four divine entities-Virija, Vivahu, Vishoka and Vishwabhavana manifested from the body of Vamdev. All of them had great resemblance to Lord Vamdev. Vamdev preached them on the finer points of religiousness so that mankind could be benefited by this knowledge.

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LORD TAT PURUSHA

The thirty-first kalpa was known as Peet Kalpa. The term 'Peet' means yellow and this Kalpa was named Peet because Lord Brahma had put on

yellow apparels during this Kalpa. Once, while he was meditating on the form of Lord Shiva, a divine child manifested before him. The child had a halo of light all around him and had put on yellow coloured clothes. Even his turban, sacred-thread and garland were yellow in colour. His arms were abnormally long.

Lord Brahma immediately realized that the child was none other than Lord Maheshwar himself. Suddenly a divine cow appeared from the mouth of Maheshwar, who had four faces and possessed all the thirty-two qualities. The divine cow was none other than Goddess Gayatri herself. Lord Brahma eulogized her and Maheshwar was very pleased by his deep devotion. Maheshwar also blessed him with divine knowledge and unrevealed the secret of yoga to him. Right then, many divine children appeared from the body of lord Maheshwar. Each of them had put on yellow apparels and had great resemblance to lord Maheshwar. They were extremely virtuous and served the mankind by giving sermons. After having completed their mission of spreading the message of virtuosity to the mankind, all of them got united with Lord Maheshwar ultimately.

A person, who is desirous of getting liberated from all his sin, must seek the blessings of Lord Maheshwar who is also known as Tat Purusha.

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LORD AGHORESH

Peet kalpa was followed by Pradhritta kalpa. Black was the predominant colour of this kalpa. Initially, the whole earth was submerged in the water

and Lord Brahma desirous of commencing his creations wished for a son. As a result, a divine child manifested whose complexion was dark. Not only that he had put on black apparels and a black crown on his head. A black sacred thread was hanging across his shoulder.

Lord Brahma immediately recognized Aghoresh and eulogized him. Lord Aghoresh became pleased by his devotion and blessed him. Just like the preceding Kalpas, four divine children manifested from lord Aghoresh's body. All of them had great resemblance with Aghoresh in every respect. In course of time, they did tremendous penance and preached the virtue of religiousness to the mankind. A person who worships Lord Aghoresh and has deep devotion in him becomes liberated from gravest of sins like Brahmhatya (sin acquired due to killing a Brahmin) etc.

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LORD ISHAN

In the beginning of Vishwaroopa kalpa, lord Brahma, desirous of commencing creation was engrossed in deep meditation. This resulted

into the manifestation of a divine cow, which puzzled lord Brahma very much. Actually, this divine cow was none other then Vishwaroopa Saraswati, but lord Brahma failed to recognize her. Lord Brahma decided to take the help of Lord Ishan and started meditating on him.

When Lord Ishan appeared before him, he was requested by Lord Brahma to shed light on the identity of that divine cow. Lord Ishan replied by saying-"The present kalpa is called Vishwaroopa kalpa. It has originated from the left side of my body and is the thirty-third kalpa. This divine cow has also originated from me. She is goddess Gauri-the source of all creation. After saying like this, Lord Ishan created four divine entities from the body of the cow-Jati, Mundi, Shikhandi and Ardhamund. All of them were very luminous and virtuous. After preaching the world for thousands of divine year. They got reunited with lord Rudra.

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THE ORIGIN OF SHIVALINGA

The sages asked Suta— Lord Shiva is formless then how come Shivalinga is worshipped? What is the significance of Shivalinga? What is the proper

method of worshipping a Shivalinga?

Suta replied— Once, Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu developed serious different on the matter of superiority. A tremendous duel broke out between them. As they were fighting a mammoth Linga appeared on the scence, the effulgence of which made efforts both of them amazed. Both of them decided to find out the origin of that divine Linga. Lord Brahma transformed his appearance into that of a swan and flew up in the sky to determine the height of that Linga. Lord Vishnu transformed himself into a roar and entered the depth of earth to find the source of that Shivalinga. But both of them failed in their objectives and returned to the same place exhausted.

Suddenly, they heard a loud sound of AUM emanating from the Shivalinga. Very soon, the whole form of OM, consisting of all the three letters A, U and M became visible. (The letters A, U and M symbolize Lord Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh respectively).

At last, both of them realized their mistake and stopped quarrelling. This way, Lord Shiva was successful in subduing their arrogance. Lord Rudra is beyond sensual perception. He is the supreme Almighty and the bestowers of divine bliss. The mystical form of Shivalinga is a symbolical expression of sacred mantra-AUM. The letter A symbolizes Beeja (Seed), M the creator himself and U is the symbolical expression of Yoni (Vagina).

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PART TWO LORD SHIVA BLESSES BRAHMA and VISHNU

At the time, when this incident of mystical Shivalinga had occurred andafter which Lord Brahmand Vishnu had stopped quarelling, Lord

Shiva appeared before them and said—

"I am very pleased with both of you. Both of -

"O Vishnu! You are the creator, Lord Shiva. This made Lord Shiva extremely pleased and he the preserver as well as the destroyer of this world. I am the supreme you, though having distinct identities have actually manifested from my body- Brahma from my left side and Vishnu from my right." almighty and distinct from all three of you- Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. Lord Vishnu expressed his undiluted devotion towards Lord Shiva. This made Lord Shiva extremely pleased and he said.

"O Vishnu! You are the creator, the preserver as well as the destroyer of this world. I am the supreme almighty and distinct from all three of you- Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh."

Linga is the personification of the Almighty God. The term Linga means fusion and the Shivalinga are said to be the symbolical expression of all the deities.

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THE MANIFESTATION OF LORD BRAHMA

The Sages requested Suta to elucidate how Lord Brahma emerged from the navel of Vishnu seated on a lotus flower.

Suta replied— At the time of deluge Lord Vishnu went in his yoganidra lying on the back of Sheshnag. As the result of his divine play, a huge lotus flower along with a long tubular stalk emerged from his navel. Lord Brahma was seated on the Lotus flower. When Lord Brahma saw Lord Vishnu, he asked-"Who are you sleeping in this ocean?" Lord Vishnu also asked the same question as to whom was he and from where had he manifested. Very soon, a quarrel ensures between them. Desirous of knowing the identity of the stranger, Lord Vishnu entered Brahma's abdomen through his mouth. He was amazed to find the existence of whole universe inside Brahma's abdomen. He remained there for thousands of year but could not find the end. Being exhausted, he came out and told Lord Brahma that even his abdomen had the same unlimited expanse.

Lord Brahma decided to check the authenticity of Vishnu's statement and entered into his abdomen through the mouth. Lord Brahma wandered inside the abdomen for thousands of year but could not find the end. Mean while, Lord Vishnu has shut each and every opening of his body which made it impossible for Lord Brahma to come out. Ultimately he was successful in coming out through the tubular stalk of the lotus. As Lord Brahma was not amused by Vishnu's behaviour, he started fighting with him. Right at that moment, Lord Mahadeva arrived there. His moments created high tide and strong mind, which vigorously shook the lotus flower.

Lord Vishnu immediately realized that these signs forebode the arrival of Mahadeva. He revealed this fact to Brahma and about Manadev's greatness. But Lord Brahma was not impressed. Lord Vishnu then said —

"Shiva is the almighty God. He is the one, whom, enlightened people are always in search for. He manifests himself in the form of an egg on account of the union of his formless and with form appearances. In course of time the egg gets divided into two halves, from which are created the different Lokas (world). The egg is the very place from where originates the whole creation. Even you (Brahma) own your existence to that egg. Your arrogance might invite the wrath of Shiva. So, come let both of us eulogize and praise the holy name of Mahadeva.

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LORD BRAHMA BECOMES THE CREATOR

At last, Lord Vishnu was successful in convincing Brahma of Shiva's supreme status. Both of them eulogized and sang hymns in the praise of

Lord Shiva.Lord Shiva became very pleased by their devotion. He requested Lord Vishnu wanted nothing else but undiluted devotion in him. Lord Shiva agreed and said "So be it".

Lord Shiva then blessed Brahma and made him the creator. Lord Brahma did a tremendous penance, which continued for a very long period. The severe penance strained his eyes as a result of which tears started rolling down his cheeks. Poisonous snakes manifested from those teardrops. Lord Brahma became disillusioned by his maiden creation and gave up his life. Eleven Rudras emerged from his body and started wailing. They then brought Lord Brahma back to life. After becoming alive, Lord Brahma eulogized Vishveshwar and goddess Gayatri. He was amazed to see the existence of whole universe inside the body of Lord Vishveshwar all the kalpas including the different incarnations of lord Shiva about origin of these kalpas and various incarnations like sadya, etc.

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DESCRIPTION OF DIFFERENT KALPAS

Lord Shiva revealed to Brahma that the Shwet-kalpa derived its name from his complexion. "I took incarnation attired in white apparels. My

complexion was fair. You being self-begotten were able to recognize me. Goddess Gayatri had also manifested from my body and later on became famous as 'Shwet-Lohit-Brahm'."

"The next kalpa was known as Lohit kalpa because of my red complexion, Goddess Gayatri had also incarnated in the form of divine cow. I became famous as Vamdev during this kalpa."

Lord Shiva then went on to describe about the rest of the kalpas which had been named after his complexion. He also gave in-depth description of various subjects like, the different worlds, the vedas the four major castes etc.

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INCARNATIONS OF SHIVA DURING VARIOUS DWAPAR YUGAS

On being enquired by Lord Brahma about his various incarnations, Lord Shiva said —

"I shall incarnate as Shwet-Mahamuni during first Dwapar Yuga of Vaivaswat manvantar. My abode shell is at Chhogal peak of Himalaya mountain. I shall have four disciples who will be proficient in the Vedas."

"I will incarnate as Sutar during second dwapar. At that time, Saddyojat Prajapati will be holding he post of Vyasa.I will have four sons- Dundubhi, Shataroopa, Richika and Keluma."

"During third dwapar and at the time when Sage Bhargav will be acting as a Vyasa, I will take incarnation as Daman. I will have four sons- Vikrosh, Vikesh, Vipash and Papnashak."

"During fourth dwapar and at the time when Sage Angira will be acting as a Vyasa, I will take incarnation as Suhotra. I will have four sons- Sumukh, Durmukh, Durdhar and Duratikram."

"I will take incarnation as Kank during fifth dwapar and at the time when Sage Savita will be fulfilling the obligations of Vyasa; I will have four sons- Sanak, Sanandan, Sanatan and Sanatkumar."

"During Sixth dwapar, I will take incarnation as Laugakshi. At that time Sage Mrityu will be holding the post of Vyasa. My sons will be Sudhama, Viraja, Shankh and Padraj."

"Sage Shataritu will act as Vyasa during Seventh dwapar. I will have four sons- Saraswat, Megh, Meghvah and Suvahan."

"Sage Vashishtha will be the Vyasa during eighth dwapar. I will take incarnation as Dadhivahan. My sons will be- Kapila, Asuri, Panch, Shikhomuni and Vashkal."

"Sage Saraswat will act as Vyasa during nineth dwapar. I will take incarnation as Rishabh. I will have four sons- Parashar, Garg, Bhargav and Angiras."

"The tenth dwapar will see Tripad fulfilling the duties of Vyasa. I will incarnate as Bhavita Muni. I will have four sons- Bala, Bandhu, Niramitra and Ketu."

"Sage Trivat will be the Vyasa during eleventh dwapar. I will take

incarnation as Ugra. My sons will be- Lambodar, Lambaksha and Lambakesh."

"Sage Shatateja will perform the duties of Vyasa during twelfth dwapar. I will have four sons- Sarvagya, Sambuddhi, Sadhya and Sarva."

"Dharma will be the Vyasa during thirteenth dwapar. I will take incarnation as Bali and live at the hermitage of the Balkhilya. I will have four sons- Sudhama, Kashyapa, Vashishtha and Viraja."

This way, Lord Shiva elaborated upon his various incarnations till the period of twenty-eight dwapar, which went as follows.

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RITUALS OF SHIVA-LINGA WORSHIP (PURITY)

Once, Goddess Parvati asked Lord Shiva about the proper methods of worshipping Shivalinga. While Shiva was elucidating upon the rituals,

Nandi who was present there too got enlightened on this sacred topic. In course of time, this knowledge was passed on to Sanatkumar, who in turn revealed it to Sage Vyasa. Suta came to know about it from Shailadi.Lord Shiva had described the following three methods, by the help of which a devotee should become pure before

commencing his worship. 1. Varuna Snan (taking bath in open) 2. Bhashma Snan (smearing ashes) 3. Mantra Snan (chanting of mantra)

Lord Shiva had stressed upon the importance of taking bath in a river or a pond. According to him a man's mind, which is like a lotus, could never blossom unless it received the radiance of the sun. Describing about the methods of taking Bhasmasnan, he said-After washing his hands and feet, a devotee should smear any of the following things on his body to make it pure-mud, cowdung ashes etc. While smearing mud on his body, he should chant the mantra -UddhatashiVarahaen. After becoming pure according to the methods mentioned above, he should then worship Lord Varuna. Having done, this, he should take a dip in the river after purifying the water by chanting the sacred 'Adhamarshan' mantra. He should then worship all the deities by sprinkling water from the Shankh (Conch) and amidst the chanting of mantras like 'Rudren Pavamanaen' etc. He should then concentrate upon the form of a Shivalinga. He should drink some water holding some Kusha grass in his right hand simultaneously.

A devotee should commence his worship only after becoming pure. In the beginning he should perform Pranayama for three times so that his lungs are filled up with fresh air. After this, he should concentrate his mind on the form of Lord Trayambak in all his glory. He should purify all the articles required for the worship by performing ablution and by chanting OM NAMAH SHIVAY. He should also make offerings of flowers, rice grains, barley etc. to the deity. Worship of Lord Shiva is believed to be incomplete without the worship of his family-Nandi, Kartikeya, Vinayak and Goddess Parvati. So, the devotee must not forget to worship them.

LORD SHIVA TESTS THE PATIENCE OF SAGES

Once upon a time, the sages were busy doing their penance to please Lord Mahadeva. Lord Shiva decided to test patience and visited daruk forest in

naked position. By the virtue of his divine power, he was successful in corrupting the conduct of the sage's wives. Those women became so infatuated by his divine appearance that they lost control omen themselves. They were desirous of satiating their lust but Shiva maintained silence and did not oblige them.

When the sages saw the womenfolk in such a pitiable condition, they started abusing Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva did not respond and disappeared from the scene. Now, the sages became very frightened. All of them went to Lord Brahma and narrated the whole incident. Lord Brahma reprimanded them by saying that how unfortunate they had been in not recognizing Lord Shiva-the Almighty. Lord Brahma said- "You have committed a grace sir by showing disrespect to your guest. Your conduct was unlike Sudarshan, a Brahmin who by his hospitality was able to win the lord of death."

Lord Brahma narrated the following tale to them —

"Once there lived a kind hearted Brahmin named Sudarshan. He was very hospitable and considered his guests, as Lord Shiva himself. He had given strict instructions to his wife that under no circumstance should a guest return unsatisfied from his home."

"Dharmaraj wanted to test Sudarshan firmness in his belief. One day he arrived at Sudarshan's hermitage disguised as a Brahmin. At that time he was not present in his hermitage. Dharmaraj refused to accept anything in donation except Sudarshan's wife herself.

"Sudarshan's wife offered herself without any hesitation. When he returned, not finding her wife started calling her name. At that time he heard a voice saying that his wife was satisfying the lust of a guest. Sudarshan remained unperturbed and requested his guest to carry on till he is satisfied."

"Dharmaraj became pleased. He appeared before Sudarshan and gave blessings. He appreciated his hospitable nature by saying that by the virtue of his undiluted hospitality he had even vanquished him (Dharmaraj)."

The sages were very ashamed of their conduct and returned Lord Brahma

to explain as to how they could have devotion in Lord Shiva. Lord Brahma elucidated on the virtue of devotion and narrated the tale of sage Shwet who had subjugated even death by his devotion.

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Once upon a time, the sages were busy doing their penance to please Lord Mahadeva. Lord Shiva decided to test patience and visited daruk forest in naked position. By the virtue of his divine power, he was successful in corrupting the conduct of the sage's wives. Those women became so infatuated by his divine appearance that they lost control omen themselves. They were desirous of satiating their lust but Shiva maintained silence and did not oblige them.

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Lord Brahma narrated the following tale to them ---

"Once there lived a kind hearted Brahmin named Sudarshan. He was very hospitable and considered his guests, as Lord Shiva himself. He had given strict instructions to his wife that under no circumstance should a guest return unsatisfied from his home."

"Dharmaraj wanted to test Sudarshan firmness in his belief. One day he arrived at Sudarshan's hermitage disguised as a Brahmin. At that time he was not present in his hermitage. Dharmaraj refused to accept anything in donation except Sudarshan's wife herself.

"Sudarshan's wife offered herself without any hesitation. When he returned, not finding her wife started calling her name. At that time he heard a voice saying that his wife was satisfying the lust of a guest. Sudarshan remained unperturbed and requested his guest to carry on till he is satisfied."

"Dharmaraj became pleased. He appeared before Sudarshan and gave blessings. He appreciated his hospitable nature by saying that by the virtue of his undiluted hospitality he had even vanquished him (Dharmaraj)."

The sages were very ashamed of their conduct and returned Lord Brahma to explain as to how they could have devotion in Lord Shiva. Lord Brahma elucidated on the virtue of devotion and narrated the tale of sage Shwet who had subjugated even death by his devotion.

SAGE SHWET

The sages were very curious to know about sage Shwet. Lord Brahma narrated the following tale

"Once, there lived a sage named Shwet. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. He lived in a cave and engaged himself in severe penance, continuously chanting the holy name of Shiva. When the time of his death approached, 'Kal arrived there to take his life. Sage Shwet started eulogizing Lord Shiva. He challenged 'Kal' that being a devotee of Shiva he was beyond the reach of death. But, Kal made fun of him and told him that nobody could escape death. Sage Shwet had unshakable faith in Lord Shiva. Pointing towards the Shivalinga, he told Kal that he would remain unharmed because of Lord Shiva who was present in that Shivalinga. Suddenly, Kal tied him with his noose and said—See, Now you are absolutely under my control and even your deity seems to be helpless. To protect his devotee, Lord Shiva arrived on the scene accomplished by Goddess Amba, Ganapati and Nandi. 'Kal' got scared to such an extent that he fainted and died."

The sages curiously asked Lord Brahma about the means with which Shiva could be pleased. Lord Brahma told them that only deep devotion and nothing else could please Lord Shiva.

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SAGES EULOGIZE LORD SHIVA

Having realized their mistake, the sages returned to Daruk forest and engaged themselves in austere penance to please Shiva. They did a

tremendous penance, which lasted for a year. Ultimately their wished were fulfilled as Lord Shiva appeared with ashes smeared all over his body. He had a begging-bowl in his hands and exhibited strange mannerism. But this time the sages did not fail in recognizing him. They begged for his forgiveness and sought his blessings. Lord Shiva became pleased and blessed them divine sight, which made them enable to see his form of Trayambak. The illumined appearance of Lord Trayambak cast a spellbound over them. They eulogized Lord Shiva by singing praise in his name. This way, their deep devotion in Lord Shiva had exploited them from their sin.

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LORD SHIVA PREACHES THE SAGES

Lord Shiva revealed to the sages that a female sex organ was nothing but a symbolic expression of goddess Parvati where as a male sex organ

symbolized his own self. He also cautioned them against making fun of hermits appearance. He said- "These hermits who appear absured by their looks are my great devotees. They don't care about their physical appearance because I predominantly occupy their thoughts. Anybody making fun of these 'naked' hermits, whose bodies are smeared with ashes is in fact making fun of me."

Lord Shiva then went on to describe the purity of ash and said—Ash is extremely pure, as it is the residual element of matter, which is left after burning. It is sacred and indestructible. This is why I smear it on my body. A person who smears ash on his body becomes liberated from all his sins. It is the destroyer of sin. It is the symbolic expression of my veerya (semen). This way Lord Shiva enlightened them on various spiritual topics.

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DADHICHI SUBJUGATES KSHOOPA

There ruled a king named Kshoopa whose friend was Sage Dadhichi. Once they got into argument over the superiority of their respective

castes. King Kshoopa was of the opinion that a Kshetriya was superior to Brahmin. Very soon, the dispute took an ugly turn and a duel broke out between them.

Dadhich punched Kshoopa on his head. Kshoopa retaliated by attacking Dadhichi with his weapon named Vajra. The assault proved to be fatal for Dadhichi and he fell down. Before his death he prayed to his guru-Shukracharya and sought his help. Realizing that his disciple was in danger, Shukracharya rushed to the spot, but Dadhichi had already died before he could arrive there.

Shukracharya knew the secret learning, Mritasanjivani Vidya. He brought back Dadhichi alive and advised him to please Lord Shiva to attain invincibility. He also taught Dadhichi the proper methods of worshipping Shiva. Dadhichi did an austere penance and pleased Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva appeared and blessed him with invincibility and also made his bones as hard as Indra's thunderbolt (Vajra).

Dadhichi then went to fight Kshoopa. He kicked Kshoopa on his chest. Kshoopa retaliated by attacking Dadhichi with his Vajra. But this time Dadhichi remained unharmed. Kshoopa was surprised to see his assault going in vain. He decided to take the help of Lord Vishnu and engaged himself in austere penance.

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KSHOOPA ACCEPTS DEFEAT

When Lord Vishnu appeared before Kshoopa, he sought his help in defeating Dadhichi. Lord Vishnu expressed his inability by saying— I

don't punish a Brahmin, especially if he is a devotee of Rudra. Dadhichi is both, so forget about defeating him. Anyhow, I will try me best to make Dadhichi devoid of his power.

Lord Vishnu then went to Dadhichi's hermitage disguised as a Brahmin. Dadhichi recognized him and came to know about his intentions. He requested Lord Vishnu to go ahead with his demand. "I have conquered fear on account of my total devotion in Lord Shiva" said Dadhichi.

Lord Vishnu did not like his arrogant behaviour. He said-"I know you have conquered fear. But, just for once, say that you are fearful of me, as I am Vishnu."

But, Dadhichi refused to obey his commands. This infuriated Lord Vishnu and he tried to kill Dadhichi with his Chakra. Dadhichi remained unharmed and said- How can this Chakra harm me? Lord Shiva has given whose devotee I am it to you whose devotee I am.

Lord Vishnu tried to use his other weapons but failed to cause any harm to Dadhichi. All the deities came to his help but still their efforts of defeating Dadhichi went futile. Lord Vishnu then tried to impress Dadhichi by his divine powers and showed his divine appearance in which the whole world was visible. Dadhichi gave a befitting reply by showing the whole universe including Lord Vishnu within his body. Lord Vishnu was amazed by his divine powers. Ultimately, Lord Brahma persuaded Lord Vishnu to discontinue the fight. Seeing his lord in such a helpless condition, Kshoopa had no other option but to accept defeat. He tried to pacify Dadhichi anger by asking cursed him as well as all the deities by saying— All of you including the deities and Vishnu will be destroyed in Daksha's yagya as the consequence of Rudra's wrath.

The place where Dadhichi's hermitage was situated later on became famously known as Sthaneshwar. It is considered to be the most sacred place of pilgrimage.

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SHILAD'S IMPOSSIBLE DEMAND

Once, Shilad did an austere penance to please Indra. He was desirous of begetting a son. When Indra appeared he requested him to bless him with

a son who was self-born as well as deathless. Indra expressed his helplessness in fulfilling impossible demand. Even Lord Brahma meets his end after the passage of crores of Kalpas"-said Indra. Shilad tried to convince the validity of his demand by citing the example of Daksha's son who according to his best of knowledge were self-born as well as deathless. Indra told him that it was not true. To prove his point Indra said-"Even Vishnu and Brahma are not self bom. Lord Vishnu created Brahma during Meghavahan Kalpa. Some are of the view that Vishnu and Brahma manifested from the left and right sides of Shiva respectively. So, your demand is unsubstantial and without any base."

According to a mythological tale Lord Vishnu manifested from in between the eyebrow of Lord Brahma. At that time Lord Shiva had arrived there to bless both of them. After the departure of Lord Shiva, Vishnu took the incarnation of Varaha (Boar) and reestablished the earth in its original position. Lord Brahma then commenced his creation and in course of time the earth came to be inhabitated by all kind of living creatures.

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PART THREE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FOUR ERAS

Shilad requested Indra to shed light on the special characteristics of each of the four eras.

Indra replied—Lord Brahma created the four eras (yugas)--Satya, Treta, Dwapar and Kali. These eras keep on occuring in a cyclic order where the former is followed by the latter. Satva guna (Pure) prevails during Satya Yuga. Rajas guna is the dominant quality prevailing during Treta Yuga. During Dwapar Yuga both Rajas guna and tamas guna are present. Tamas guna (Dark) is the dominant quality prevailing during Kali Yuga. During Satya Yuga, meditation was the means by the help of which a man could achieve salvation while oblation, devotion and donation were said to be the means capable of giving salvation during Treta Yuga, Dwapar Yuga and Kali Yuga respectively.

The inhabitants of Satya Yuga were virtuous and free from sorrow. But the vice of desire started to raise its head during Treta Yuga and people started being troubled by it. Lord Brahma created the warrior caste Kshatriya for the protection of virtuosity. Brahma propogated the rituals of oblation during Treta Yuga. Everything was fine till Treta Yuga but there was a drastic change in the human behaviour during Dwapar Yuga. All the vices surfaced and people were troubled by them. Some extraordinary literary feats were accomplished during dwapar-Sage Vyasa categorized the veda into four sections, all the major Puranas were compiled and smritis were written. Kali Yuga saw the decline of virtuosity and religiousness. Ignorance and false knowledge prevailed everywhere during this era.

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KALI YUGA

Describing about the decline in moral values during Kali Yuga, Indra told Shilad— In Kali Yuga, people will be under the total influence of the

worldly illusions. Ignorance diseases, fear and hunger will be prevalent everywhere. Famine and drought would occur quite frequently as the fall out of inadequate rain. Sinners would outnumber the virtuous people would deviate from the path of religiousness. Brahmins would lose their superiority and Shudras would become the rulers. Brahmins will not be respected and will be forced to serve the lowlye people. Majority of women would be immoral and progenies would not obey the commands of their parents.

Predicting a grim scenario, Indra stressed great importance of religiousness during Kali Yuga and said- A virtuous deed accomplished in Kali Yuga gives fruits in a day as compared to Treta and Dwapar Yugas, which take one year and one month respectively.

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MANIFESTATION OF BRAHMA

Once, Lord Brahma did an austere penance to please Lord Shiva. Shiva manifestated as Ardhnarishwar (partly male partly female) from his

forehead and said—'I am your son'. But, the unberabale heat emanating from the effulgence of Ardhanarishwar burnt the whole world including Lord Brahma.

Lord Shiva then separated the feminine part of his body (Goddess Parmeshwari) and instructed her to begin creation. Both Brahma and Vishnu manifested from the body of goddess Parmeshwari. Lord Vishnu divided his body into two halves and created the world. Lord Brahma once again did a tremendous penance which lasted for ten thousand years. Once again Shiva manifested from his forehead, but this time as Neelalohit. Lord Neela Lohit became pleased by Brahma's eulogy and blessed him.

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Shilad did a tremendous penance to please Lord Shiva. His penance continued for thousands of year. At last, Lord Shiva appeared before him

and said—"I am extremely pleased by you devotion. I shall bless you with a son who will become famous for his knowledge and learning." But, Shilad was desirous of a self-bom and immortal son. Lord Shiva said —'Your desire will be fulfilled. Even Lord Brahma had requested me to take an incarnation. I will take birth as your son and my name will be Nandi."

In course of time, Shiva manifested from the oblation site. The deities became pleased after seeing Nandi, who possessed three eyes, four arms and a crown on his head.

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THE NETHER WORLD

Lord Shiva is the source from where all the different worlds originate. People in their ignorance are unware of the fact that the whole universe is

nothing but a medium through which Shiva manifests himself. The various worlds like Maha, Jana, Tapa, Satya etc. and all the natural elements like earth. Sky ocean etc, owe their origin to Shiva. Underneath the earth lies the netherworlds which are all together seven in number—Tala, Vitala, Sutala etc. The netherworld named Mahatala is the dwelling place of Lord Muchkand and king Bali. Sutala is yellow in colour while Vitalo shines brightly like a coral. Atala is of white colour and Tala has a shade of white.

All these netherworld have the same expanse as the earth. Rasatal is the place where Vasuki resides. Talatal is the dwelling place of mighty demons like Virochan and Hiranyaksha. It is also the place where hell is situated. The netherworld named Sutal is the dwelling place where Tarka, Agnimukh and Prahlada live. Tala is the dwelling place of mighty warriors like Mahakumbh, Hayagreeva etc.

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THE SEVEN ISLANDS

The earth consists of seven islands, many rivers, mountains and seven oceans. The Plaksha, Shalmali, Kush, Kraunch, Shak and Pushkar. Lord

Shiva alongwith goddess Ambika and his ganas dwell in all these seven islands in one form or the other.

The name of the seven oceans are Ksharod, Rasod, Surod, Ghatodakshai, Dadhyamav, Kshirod and Swadood. Lord Shiva manifests himself in all of them. Lord Shiva dwells in the ocean named Kshiramav. King Priyavrata was the grandson of Manu, who ruled during Swayambhuva manvantar. He had ten sons— Agnighra, Agnibahu, Meghatithi, Vasu, Vayushman. Jyotishman, Dyutiman, Havya, Savan etc. Priyavrata had made Aghnighra the king of Jambudweepa. Similarly the islands of Plakshadweepa, Shalmali, Kushadweepa, Kraunchdweepa, Shalvadweepa and Pushkar were given to Medhatithi, Vayushman, Jyotishman, Dyutiman Havya and Savan respectively. Havya had seven sons who became rulers and the different territories they ruled desired their names from them.

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BHARATA VARSH

Agnighra—the ruler of Jambudweepa was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. He had nine sons— Nabhi, Kimpurusha, Harivarsha, Ilavrata, Ramaya,

Hiranyaman, Kuru, Bhadrashva and Ketumal. Agnighra appointed Nabhi the king of Hemakhya. Similarly, Kimpurusha, Harivarsha, Ilavrata, Ramaya, Hiranyaman, Kuru, Bhadrashva and Ketumal were given the kingdoms of Hemakoot, Naishadh, Meru, Neelachal, Shwet, Sringavarsh, Malvan and Gandhamoodan respectively. After this, Agnighra renounced everything and went to do penance.

Merudevi was Nabhi's wife and the mother of Rishabh. After growing up Rishabh got married and became the father of no less than one hundred sons. Among them Bharata was the eldest. When Bharata grow up, Rishabh appointed him as his successor and after renouncing everything went to the forest.

Bharata went on to become a great king and ruled over the whole territory southwards of Himalaya. Our country derives its name from him. Bharata had a son named Sumati who succeeded his father as a king.

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Bharata went on to become a great king and ruled over the whole territory southwards of Himalaya. Our country derives its name from him. Bharata had a son named Sumati who succeeded his father as a king.

THE MERU MOUNTAIN

Meru mountain is situated in the heart of Jambudweepa. The Meru range is spread in the area of 16 thousand yojan. Its towering peak is 84

thousand in height from the ground level and had even penetrated the depth of earth to the measurement of 16 thousand yojan. Meru mountain is considered to be very sacred and is believed to be the dwelling place of the deities.

Yamraj's abode—Vaivaswatipuri is situated in the souther part of Meru mountain. Some other holy places like Shuddhavati, Gandhavati and Yashomati are also situated on this mountain where Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva are believed to have their respective abodes. The sun continuously shines over Meru mountain. A river named Jambu flows down this mountain. There is also a tree by the same name which is eternally ladden with fruits. The Meru mountain is surrounded on all its sides by a country Ilavrita. The residents of Ilavrita relish the fruits of Jambu tree.

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THE PROMINENT MOUNTAINS

Describing about the physical characteristics os all tje seven islands, Suta says —

"Seven mountains are situated in Plaksha dweepa- Gobhedak, Chandra, Narada, Dundubhi, Soyak, Sumana and Vaibhraj. Similarly, the prominent mountain ranges situated in Shalmali dweepa are Kumud, Uttam, Balahak, Drona, Karkamahish Kumudman etc. Kushadweepa also has seven mountains among which Vidhrabh and Hem are the prominent ones. All these seven islands are surrounded by seven oceans. The mountain named Lokalok is so gigantic in size that half of its part is always covered in darkness.

The omnipresent Lord Shiva pervades the whole universe. Once, being confronted by the effulgence of Lord Shiva, who had disguised himself as a Yaksha, all the deities became devoid of their power. Indra was amazed and asked the Yaksha as to who he was. Lord Shiva disappeared without giving any answer and goddess Ambika appeared before the deities. Indra asked her the same question to which goddess Ambika replied— He was none other than the almighty Shiva. I being the Prakriti (nature) do creation following his instructions. He is the embodiment of Purusha (Supreme almighty).

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THE SUN

The movement of Sun is rapid when it is positioned south of equator (Dakshainayan), on the other hand its movement is slow when positioned

north os equator (Uttarayan).The time is indicated by the various positions of Sun while it is on its course of movement in the horizon. While the sun is situated in the South-East direction it is believed to be the morning time. Similarlt, when the Sun has positioned itself in the south-west, North-west or South-East direction, it is said to be the 'before-noon', 'after-noon' and Night respectively.

The Sun is believed to be mounted on a chariot while on its course of movement in the Horizon. All the deities, apsaras and Gandharvas are believed to follow its movement. The periods of day and night consist of 30 ghadi each. The Sun causes rainfall due to the process of evaporation. Water is the source of life and is the manifestation of Lord Shiva himself.

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LORD BRAHMA ASSIGNS LORDSHIPS TO THE DEITIES

The Sages requested Suta to describe how Lord Brahma assigned Lordships to all the deities and the demons.

Suta replied— The Sun was made the lord of all the planets. Soma was made the lord of all the constellations and medicinal herbs. Similarly, Vaun was made the Lord of water, while Kubera was assigned the Lordship of wealth. Lord Vishnu attained the Lordship of Adityas, Pawak of Vasus, Daksha of Prajapatis, Indra of deities, and Prahlada attained the Lordship of all the demons. Some other prominent species and the assigned Lordships are as follows—

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SPECIES	LORD	SPECIES	LORD
Animals	Rudra	Women	Uma
Rudras	Neelalohit	Obstacles	Gajanan
Power of Speech	Saraswati	Mountains	Himalaya
Rivers	Ganga	Oceans	Ksheersagar
Trees	Peepal (Fig)	Gandharvas	Chitrarathi
Serpents	Takshak	Birds	Garuda

Prithu was made the lord of Earth and Lord Shiva the lord of whole universe.

THE CHARIOTS OF SUN MOON AND OTHER PLANETS

The chariot of Surya is believed to have been created by Lord Brahma. It is made up of gold and its wheels have five spokeseach. The chariot is very huge in size and its expanse covers the area of nine thousand yojan. It is pulled by seven horses which are of green complexion. The movement of Sun results into the occurence of day and night. The moon's chariot consists of three wheela and is pulled by ten white horses. Each wheel is supported by one hundred spokes. The chariots of Mercury, Mars and Jupiter are believed to be pulled by eight horses each. The chariot of Saturn is believed to be pulled by ten black horses.

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THE RADIANCE OF SURYA

The Surya is the source to which all the living beings owe their existence. All the deities derive their effulgence from Surya, who in turn derives its

own radiance from Lord Mahadeva.Time is determined with the help of Surya's movement. One can not even imagine the various units of time, like Kshana, muhurta day, night, fortnight, month, season etc. without the existence of Surya. The Sun, which illuminates the whole world is nothing but the medium through which the almighty Rudra manifests himself. The Sun sheds thousands of rays among which seven are prominent- Sushumna, Rishikesh, Vishwakarma, Vishwatyacha, Annadh, Sarvavasu and Swarah.

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PART FOUR DHRUVA - THE SUPREME DEVOTEE

The Sages asked Suta as to how Dhruva became successful in attaining immortality and supreme status among all the stars. Suta narrated the

following tale—

There lived a king named Uttanpad, who had two queens—Suniti and Suruchi. The eldest queen Suniti had a son named Dhruva. One day while Dhruva was sitting in his father's lap, Suruchi-- his step mother, contemptuously pulled him from Uttanpad's lap and made her own son sit in his place. Dhruva went to Suniti and complained about his steps mother's behaviour. Suniti advised

Dhruva that he should seek for the supreme status, which is permanent. Following his mother's advice, Dhruva went to the forest in search of that supreme status. In the forest, he met Sage Vishwamitra who advised him to seek the blessings of Lord Keshav by chanting the sacred mantra Om Namo Vasudevay. Dhruva did an austere penance for thousands of year. At last, lord Vishnu became pleased and appeared before him mounted on Garuda. Vishnu touched Dhruva's face with his conch as a result of which he attained Self knowledge. Vishnu blessed Dhruva by saying —I give you the supreme place, which even the deities and the sages long for. This way Dhruva attained a supreme status among all the stars with the blessings of Vishnu.

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THE ORIGIN OF DEITIES

On being enquired by the sages about the origin of deities, demons and other celestial entities, Suta said— Daksha being desirous of enhancing

the population, created ten-thousand sons merely by his wish and instructed them to contribute in the propagation of population. His objective remained unfulfilled as Narada was successful in preaching them towards the path of devotion. As a result all of them went to do meditation after renouncing the world.

Seeing his efforts go in vain, Daksha created ten thousand more sons who were convinced by Narada to the path of renunciation once again. Daksha then begot sixty daughters from his wife named Vairini. When these girls grew up, Daksha married to different sages—ten of them were married to Dharma, thirteen to Kashyapa, twenty-seven to Soma, four to Arishtanemi, two to Bhrigu's son, two to Krishashwa and the remaining two were married to Angira.

The named of Dharma's wives were Marutivati, Vasu, Aryama, Lamba, Bhanu, Arundhati, Sankalpa, Muhurta, Sadhya and Vishwabhamini. Vishwabhamini was the mother of Vishvedeva, while Sadhya gave birth to Sadhva. Similarly, Marutvati, Bhanu, Muhurta, Lamba and Sankalpa gave birth to Varutwan, Bhanav, Mahurtik Ghosh and Sankalpa respectively. Vasu became the mother of eight Vasus.

Among the twenty seven wives of Kashyapa the names of some prominent ones were—Aditi, Diti, Arishta, Surasa, Muni, Surabhi, Vinata, Tamra, Krodha, Vasha, Ha, Kadru, Twishad, Anga etc.Kashyapa had two sons from Diti, Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha. Danu gave birth to one hundred sons among whom Viprachit was very prominent. Tamra gave birth to six daughters— Shuki, Sweni, Sugreevi, Gridhika, Bhasi and Shuni.

Kashyapa did an austere penance and was blessed with two sons-Vatsar and Asit, Vatsar had two sons—Naibudh and Raimbh. Asit married Ekpama and had one son from her— Brahmanishth.Vashishtha was married to Arundhati and had one hundred sons from her among whom Shakti was the eldest. Shakti was married to Adrishyanti and Parashar was his son. Dwaipayan was the son of Parashar and Shukra was Dwaipayan's son.

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SAGE PARASHAR

The Sages asked Suta how Shakti had been devoured by a demon named Rudhir.

Sutiji replied— Once, Sage Vashishtha was presiding over a grand Yagya being organized by a king named Kalmashpad. Vashishtha had a rivalry with Vishwamitra. On seeing Vashishtha busy in that Yagya, Vishwamitra instigated Rudhir— a demon, to kill his sons. Rudhir followed the instructions and devoured Vashishtha's sons including Shakti.

When Vashishtha learnt about his sons death his heart was filled with grief. He desired to give up his life but was prevented from doing so by his daughter-in-law. She informed him about her pregnancy and said— Very soon you will see your grandson. So, quit the idea of giving up your life. Vashishtha, though still mournful of his son's death, postponed the idea of giving up his life for the time being. One day while he was engrossed in the thoughts of his departed son, he was amazed to listen the recital of a vedic hymn. He looked all around but found nobody. Suddenly he heard a heavenly voice that revealed by his grandson who was still inside the womb of his mother. In course of time, Arundhati gave birth to a son who was named Parashar. One day young Parashar curiously enquired from his mother as to why she did not put on ornaments like other women of her age do. Arundhati kept quite but when Parashar kept on insisting she revealed to him that it was not proper for a mournful women to adorn herself. She also told him how his father—Shakti had been killed by Rudhir, the demon.

Parashar consoled Arundhati by saying that he would avenge his father's lord Shiva. He then made an earthen Shivalinga and started worshipping it by chanting the scared mantras of Shiva-Sukta and trayambak Sukta. Lord Shiva became pleased by his devotion and blessed him with a divine vision which enabled him to see his dead father. Parashar then commenced a yagya with the purpose of annihilating the demons. All the demons started being tormented by the extreme heat generated by that oblation. Vashishtha prevented by that oblation. Vashishtha prevented Parashar from contiuing with that Yagya as many innocent demons had suffered. Parashar stopped performing the rituals at his father's request.

Sage Pulastya had also been invited in that yagya. He was very pleased by his devotion toward his father and blessed him with the knowledge of all the scriptures. In course of time, Parashar became famous for his treatise —Vishnu Purana.

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THE LINEAGE OF ADITYA

On being enquired by the Sages about the respective lineage of Aditya (Sun) and Soma (moon) Suta replied—

Sage Kashyapa had a son—Aditya, from Aditi. Aditya had four wives-Sangya, Rajyi, Prabha and Chhaya. Sangya gave birth to Manu whereas Ragyi was the mother of Yama, Yamuna and Raivat. Prabha gave birth to Prabhat while chhaya was the mother of three children—Savarni, Shani, Tapti and Vrishti.

Chhaya was extremely affectionate towards her step son— Yama. One day Yama kicked her in anger as a result of which his leg became inflicted with incurable disease. He became cured of his disease only after doing penance for thousands of years at as place called Gokarna.

Manu had nine sons— Ikshavaku, Nabhag, Dhrishnu, Sharyati, Narishyant, Nabhag, Arisht, K a rush and Prishaghna. He also had three daughters—Ila, Jyeshtha and Varishtha who coincidentally attained male physique later on in their life. Ila became famous as Sudyumna and had three sons— Utkal, Gopa and Vinitashva. Harishwa was the descendant of Ikshavaku and had a son named Vasumana. Tridhanva was Vasumana's son. He had attained the designation of 'Ganapatya' by virtue of accomplishing one thousand Ashwamedha Yaga. Tridhanva had a son named Trayyarun and the name of his son was Satyavrata. The same Satyavrata became famous as Trishanku, who was the only person to attain to heaven with his mortal body.

The most truthful king Harish Chandra was the son if Trishanku. Harish chandra had a son named Rohit. Sagar belonged to the lineage of Harishchandra. He had two wives— Prabha had given birth to sixty thousand sons but Bhanumati had only one son named Asamanjas.Anshuman was the son on Asamanjas. Anshuman's son was Dilip. Sage Bhagirath was the son of Dilip.

Some prominent personality who belonged to the lineage of Ikshavaku were Shrut, Nabhag, Ambarish, Dirghabahu, Dilip (Dirghabahu's son), Raghu, Aja, Dasharath, Rama, Lakshman, Bharata, Shatrughna, Lav and Kush. The famous king Pururava also cause from the same lineage. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. His son was Nahush. Nahush had six sons among whom Yayati was the eldest. Yayati had two wives—Devayani and Sharmishtha. Yayati ruled over the whole earth. He had conquered the whole earth with the help of divine weapons and chariot which he had received from his father in law—Shukracharya (Devayani's

father).

Yayati had two sons from Devayani— Yadu and Turvasu. He also had three sons from his second wife—Sharmishtha whose names were Drushya, Anu and Puru.Yayati appointed his youngest son Puru as his successor because of his total devotion towards his parent. Yadu was made the ruler of Southern province.

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YADU DYNASTY

Yadu had five sons among whom Sahastrajeet was the eldest. Shatarjay was the oson of Sahastrajeet and himself had three sons—Haihya, Haya

and Venu. Dharma was Haihya's son. Dharmanetra was the son of Dharma and himself had two sons—Kirti and Sanjay.Sanjay's son was Mahishman and Bhadrashrenya was Mahishman's son. Durdam was the son of Bhadrashrenya and Durdam's son was Dhanak.

Dhanak had four sons among whom the youngest —Kartaveerya Arjuna was very mighty. He was killed by Parashuran. Kartaveerya Arjuna had many sons among whom Shoor, Shoorsen, Dhrishta, Krishna and Jayadhuraja were prominent. Jayadhwaja had a very mighty son named Talajangha. Talajangha too had many mighty and brave sons like Veetihotra, Vrisha eetc. Vrisha had a son— Madhu. Madhu's son was Vrishni.

Some other prominent kings of Yadu dynasty were—Praghrajit, Jyamagh, Shrut, Vidarbh, Subhag, Vayu, Kratha, Kaushik, Romapad, Vabhru, Sughriti, Kunta, Ranadhrista, Bhimarath, Navarath, Dhridharath, Karambha, Devaratha, Devakshatrak and Madhu. The famous Kaurava dynasty came from the lineage of Madhu.

YADU DYNASTY

Yadu had five sons among whom Sahastrajeet was the eldest. Shatarjay was the oson of Sahastrajeet and himself had three sons--Haihya, Haya and Venu. Dharma was Haihya's son. Dharmanetra was the son of Dharma and himself had two sons--Kirti and Sanjay.Sanjay's son was Mahishman and Bhadrashrenya was Mahishman's son. Durdam was the son of Bhadrashrenya and Durdam's son was Dhanak.

Dhanak had four sons among whom the youngest --Kartaveerya Arjuna was very mighty. He was killed by Parashuran. Kartaveerya Arjuna had many sons among whom Shoor, Shoorsen, Dhrishta, Krishna and Jayadhuraja were prominent. Jayadhwaja had a very mighty son named Talajangha. Talajangha too had many mighty and brave sons like Veetihotra, Vrisha eetc. Vrisha had a son-- Madhu. Madhu's son was Vrishni.

Some other prominent kings of Yadu dynasty were--Praghrajit, Jyamagh, Shrut, Vidarbh, Subhag, Vayu, Kratha, Kaushik, Romapad, Vabhru, Sughriti, Kunta, Ranadhrista, Bhimarath, Navarath, Dhridharath, Karambha, Devaratha, Devakshatrak and Madhu. The famous Kaurava dynasty came from the lineage of Madhu.

SRI KRISHNA

Ahuka came from the lineage of Yadu. He had two sons— Devak and Ugrasen. The eldest son, Devak had eleven children—four sons and seven

daughters. The names of his sons were— Devavan, Upadeva, Sudeva and Devarakshit. All his seven daughters, which also included Devaki were married to Vasudeva. Ahuk's youngest son, Ugrasen had nice sons among Kansa was the eldest.

Vasudeva had a son named Balarama from Rohini. Devaki, one of his wives gave birth of lord Sri Krishna. Vasudeva had exchanged Sri Krishna with the daughter of Yashoda as Sri Krishna's life was under threat from Kansa. When Kansa tried to kill her, She slipped away from her hand and ascended towards the sky. She then thundered. "There is no use killing me. The person who is supposed to kill you has already taken birth'. Her prophesy came to be truth and Kansa was ultimately killed by Sri Krishna.

Sri Krishna had 16108 Queens among whom Rukmini was dearest. He did an austere penance to please Lord Shiva as the result of which He was blessed with many sons like Charudeshna, Sucharu, Pradyumna etc. He also had a son named Samb from Jambawati. Lord Krishna left for heavenly abode after enjoying a long life of 120 years. He had destroyed His whole clan before leaving His mortal body. A hunter named Jara who mistook him to be a deer killed him. Due to the curse of Ashtavakra, Sri Krishna's wives had been abducted by the dacoits.

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LORD BRAHMA BLESSES THE DEMONS

The Sages asked Suta as to how did Maya—The demon acquire three well fortified forts from Lord Brahma and how was lord Shiva finally

successful in destroying them.

Suta replied— After Tarakasur's death his three sons, Vidyunmali, Kamlaksha and Tarakaksha did tremendous penance to please Lord Brahma. When Lord Brahma appeared. They expressed their desire of attaining immortality. Lord Brahma refused to oblige them. The demons after consulting each other demanded three invincible forts from him and said 'Only such a person should be able to kill us, who is capable of destroying all the three forts with a single shot of an arrow.'

Lord Brahma blessed them and disappeared. Maya, then did an austere penance and with the help of divine powers attained from it, constructed three forts at three different places. The fort made of gold was situated in the heaven, while the silver-fort was situated in the space. The third fort, which was made of iron, was situated on the earth. The gold-fort was given to Tarakaksha, the silver-fort to Kamalaksha and the iron-fort was given to Vidyunmali. After acquiring these invincible forts all the demons had become extremely arrogant. They started tormenting the deities.

The deities went to Lord Vishnu and requested help. Lord Vishnu created thousands of spirits (Bhootganas) and instructed them to destroy those three forts. But, the Bhootganas were unsuccessful in their attempt and were charred to death. Lamenting their death the deities went to Lord Vishnu and sought help once again. Lord Vishnu was aware that the demons derived their power from Lord Shiva. So, He decided to deviate them from the path of Shiva's devotion. He then created an illusionary entity. The illusionary entity went to the place where demons lived and was successful in influencing them by his illusionary tactics.

All the demons became so impressed by him that they stopped worshipping Lord Shiva and became His disciples. This resulted into a total degradation of moral values among the demons. Finding the time opportune, Lord Vishnu eulogized Shiva who appeared and agreed to destroy those three forts. Vishwakarma made a divine chariot for Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma became the charioteer. Mounted on that chariot, Lord Shiva proceeded towards the demon. All the deities followed him.

Lord Brahma said—'Right now it is Pushya yoga and it is very auspicious for launching and it is very auspicious for launching an attack on the

demon's forts.'Lord Shiva then released his arrow, which after destroying all the three forts returned to his quiver. The deities became pleased and eulogized lord Shiva.

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APPOINTMENT OF ANDHAK AS THE LORD OF GANAS

On being asked by the Sages how Andhak—the demon was appointed as the lord of Ganas by Lord Shiva, Suta narrated the following tale to them. —The mighty demon, Andhak was Hiranyaksh's son. By the virtue of his austere penance he had received a boon of immortality from Lord Brahma. In course of time he conquered all the three worlds. He started tormenting the deities and as a result of which they had to take refuge in the causes of Mandarachal mountain.

The deities went to Lord Shiva and narrated their woeful tale to him. They also requested him to kill Andhak so that they could live in peace. Lord Shiva went to the place where Andhak lived accompanied by all the deities. When Andhak saw them coming, he attacked menacingly with his various weapons. The deities became scared and started running helter-skelter. Lord Shiva then killed Andhak with his trident. He then lifted the corpse with the help of his trident and kept in that position for a very long period.

The divine sight of Lord Shiva had liberated Andhak from all his sins. Finding himself in a helpless position, Andhak eulogized Shiva and begged for forgiveness. At last, Lord Shiva became pleased and brought Andhak down after lowering his trident. He gave him the designation of a Ganapati and made him the lord of his ganas.

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THE LIBERATION OF EARTH

The Sages were curious to know how Lord Vishnu in his incarnation of Varaha (Boar), had liberated the earth from the captivity of Hiranyaksha.

They also wanted to know why Lord Shiva adorned himself with the horn of that boar.

Suta narrated the following tale— Hiranyaksha—Andhak's father was a tyrant. After Vanquishing the deities, he had taken the earth to 'Rasatala'. The deities sought the help of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu then took the incarnation of Varaha (boar) and killed Hiranyaksha with his sharp horns. He then brought the earth from Rasatala and kept it in its original position. The deities eulogized both Lord Vishnu and mother earth. Lord Shiva adorned and himself with the ornament carved out from the horn of that boar. This is the reason why he is also called 'Danshtri' (wild boar).

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KILLING OF JALANDHAR

The Sages requested Suta to reveal how Lord Shiva had killed the notorious demon— Jalandhar. Suta narrated the following tale—

There was a demon named Jalandhar. He had manifested from the ocean. He had acquired divine power by the virtue of his austere penance. Jalandhar had defeated the deities and conquered the heaven. He even defeated Lord Vishnu and boasted—'I have conquered everybody. Now! Only Shiva is lift to be conquered.'

Jalandhar went to fight a battle with Lord Shiva accompanied by a huge army. Lord Shiva was aware of the boon, which Lord Brahma had given to Andhak and which had made him invincible. Jalandhar derived his power from his wife- Vrinda who was an extremely chaste woman. As per the plans of the deities. Lord Vishnu disguised as Jalandhar and went to breach the modesty of Vrinda. Vrinda could not recognize Lord Vishnu and mistook him to be her husband—Jalandhar. Ultimately, Lord Vishnu was successful in his motives.

Meanwhile, the battle had commenced between Jalandhar and Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva destroyed the whole army of Jalandhar by the sight of his third eye. Jalandhar became furious and tried to kill Lord Shiva with the Sudarshan Chakra, which he had snatched from Vishnu. Butas soon as he lifted the Sudarshan chakra, his body got cut into two parts. The death of Jalandhar brought immense joy to the deities.

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THE ORIGIN OF LORD GANESH

Once, the deities requested Lord Shiva to device some means so that they no longer had to live under the threat of the demons.The most merciful

Lord Pinaki Shiva then took the incarnation of Ganeshwar. He had a human body but his heard resembled like an elephant. He held a trident in his hand. All the deities eulogized Lord Ganesh—the Lord of wisdom and the remover of all obstacles. Lord Ganesh is the first deity to be worshipped in any ritual as he is believed to remove all the obstacles. A devotee of Lord Ganesh is free from the fear of failures and achieves success in any endeavour he undertakes.

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SHIV TANDAV

The deities were curious to know the story behind 'Tandav'- the famous dance of Lord Shiva. So, they asked Suta how it started and what made

Shiva to perform Tandav.

Suta replied— There lived a demon named Daruk. He had acquired divine powers by the virtue of his austere penance. He started tormenting the deities, sages and all the virtuous people. All the deities went to Lord Shiva and requested him to give protection from the tyrany of Daruk. Lord Shiva then requested Parvati to help the deities. One part of Parvati's consciousness entered into the body of Lord Shiva. But, the deities were not aware of this happening. Goddess Parvati then attained her physical form with the help of poison stored in the throat of Lord Shiva. The effet of poison had made her complexion dark. Lord Shiva then brought her out from within his body through his third eye.

The deities became frightened after seeing her terrific appearance. She was none other than Goddess Kali. Goddess Kali then killed Daruk with the permission of Parvati.But, even after the death of Daruk, her anger did not subside and the whole world was ablaze due to her anger. Lord Shiva then incarnated as a small child and started crying as if he was hungry. Goddess Kali could not decipher the illusions of Shiva and thought that the child was crying because of hunger. She started feeding the child her breast-milk. In the process of sucking milk, Shiva also sucked out her anger.

The extreme anger of Kali had resulted into the manifestation of eight divine entities who became famous as 'Kshetrapal. After her anger had subsided Goddess Kali became unconscious. Lord Shiva then performed his famous dance—Tandav for the first time to bring Kali back to consciousness. He was accompanied by all the ghosts and spirits in his terrific dance. When Kali regained her consciousness she found Shiva dancing. She too started dancing and this is the reason why she is also called Yogini.

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PART FIVE UPAMANYU

The sages were curious to know how Lord Shiva had bestowed the designation of Ganpatya and an ocean of milk to Upamanyu. They

requested Suta to shed light on the two incidents.

Suta narrated the following tale —

Upamanyu was a brilliant child. There is an interesting story how he became the supreme devotee of Lord Shiva. Once, during his childhood he had gone to his maternal-uncle's place. One day, while he was hungry he tried to drink some milk. But his cousin did not allow him to drink milk and after snatching the bowl of milk drank himself.

Upamanyu started crying. He went to his mother who tried to console him by giving a solution of powdered grains. But, Upamanyu did not want anything less than milk. His mother said—'You should be satisfied with whatever you get. Perhaps we did not worship Lord Shiva in our past lives. Our hardships are the fallouts of those unpardonable sins. Only a devotee of Shiva is entitled to all kinds of comfort and pleasure.'

Upamanyu decided then and there to please Shiva by his penance and attain an ocean of milk from him. He went to Himalaya mountain and started doing an austere penance. His penance had resulted into the generation of unbearable heat. The deities became terrified and went to seek the help of Lord Vishnu.

Lord Vishnu along with the deities went to Lord Shiva and sought his help. Lord Shiva decided to test the devotion of Upamanyu. He disguised himself as Indra and went to the place where Upamanyu was doing penance. He started abusing Shiva which made Upamanyu so angry that he tried to kill him. When Upamanyu failed in his attempt to kill Shiva, he tried to kill himself by chanting 'Agneya mantra'.

Lord Shiva was very pleased by his total devotion and revealed his identity. He blessed Upamanyu and after accepting him as his son granted the designation of Ganpatya. He also provided oceans of milk and curd to Upamanyu.

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THE GREATNESS OF DWADASHAKSHAR MANTRA

On being asked by the sages about the sacred mantra— the chanting of which enabled a man to attain salvation Suta replied —

Lord Vishnu gives salvation to those people who endeavour to seek Brahm— the Almighty God. A man whose mind is preoccupied with the thought of Lord Vishnu and nothing else is entitled to attain Salvation. Such a man is also blessed by goddess Lakshmi."

Describing about the greatness of Dwadakshar mantra, Suta said -"The sacred mantra consists of twelve letters 'OM NAMO BHAGAVATE VASUDE VAY'.

This powerful mantra helps a man to achieve proximity with Lord Vishnu.

'Once there lived a brahmin who used to stammer while talking. All his efforts of making him speak distinctly went in vain as the child continued to lisp. When the brahmin tried to teach his son. the dwadakshar mantra, he incorrectly pronounced 'Vasudev as 'Etareva'. So the child was given the name 'Etareva'. The brahmin became disgusted and married a second time. He had many sons from his second wife, all of whom were very studious.

Etareva's mother used to curse her fate because of his habit of stammering. One day she said— 'Look! I am no more able to tolerate the humiliation of being a mother of a dull child—Look at your step-brothers, who have achieved fame and respect on account of their learning. I have decided to give up my life.' Etareva became very sad. He started chanting the dwadashakshar mantra regularly and as a result a day came, when he could pronounce it correctly and without stammering.

One day Etareva happened to pass by a place where a yagya was being performed. As soon as he reached that place, the priests found to their surprise that they had become dumb. All the priests became restless, as the rituals were still incomplete. Looking at their pitiable condition, Etareva chanted the dwadakshar mantra— OM NAMO BHAGAVATE VASUDEVAY. The priest regained their power of speech by the virtue of the flawless pronunciation of the mantra. Such is the greatness of dwadakshar mantra. Later on, Etareva went on to become a renowned scholar. A person who chants this sacred mantra regularly become liberated from all his sins and attains to Vishnu Lok.

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SHADAKSHAR MANTRA

Describing about the greatness of Shadakshar mantra that consists of six letters, Suta said—

The sacred mantra — OM NAMAH SHIVAY holds a supreme place among all the mantras. During the Meghavahan kalpa of the first Treta Yuga, there lived a brahmin named Dhoondhmook. He became a licentious person due to the curse of a sage. As a result he became a man of loose moral conduct. His wife gave birth to a child on the inauspicious day of Amavasya. The astrologers predicted a very bleak future for that new born child.

When the child grew up he became notorious for his sinful conduct. Dhoondhmook married his son in a respectable family but his son being a man of loose character, developed intimacy with a woman belonging to a low caste. One day, Dhoondhmook that son developed sharp differences with that woman on some matter and in a fit of range killed her. When the family members of that woman came to know about her death, they retaliated by killing Dhoondhmook his wife and his daughter-in-law. Since Dhoondhmook's son was not present in the house at that time he survived. He avenged the death of his family members by killing the assasins. Now Dhoondhmook's son had become disillusioned with life. He started wandering aimlessly and reached a hermitage. The sage who lived in that hermitage was a great devotee of Lord Shiva and taught him the rituals of Pashupat Vrata as well as the sacred Shodakshar mantra. Dhoondhmook's son performed the rituals of Pashupat Vrat for twelve months. All the while he kept on chanting the Shadakshar mantra. As the result of his devotion towards Lord Shiva and by the virtue of chanting Sadakshar mantra he as well as all his ancestors attained salvation.

SHADAKSHAR MANTRA

Describing about the greatness of Shadakshar mantra that consists of six letters, Suta said--

The sacred mantra -- OM NAMAH SHIVAY holds a supreme place among all the mantras. During the Meghavahan kalpa of the first Treta Yuga, there lived a brahmin named Dhoondhmook. He became a licentious person due to the curse of a sage. As a result he became a man of loose moral conduct. His wife gave birth to a child on the inauspicious day of Amavasya. The astrologers predicted a very bleak future for that new born child.

When the child grew up he became notorious for his sinful conduct. Dhoondhmook married his son in a respectable family but his son being a man of loose character, developed intimacy with a woman belonging to a low caste. One day, Dhoondhmook that son developed sharp differences with that woman on some matter and in a fit of range killed her. When the family members of that woman came to know about her death, they retaliated by killing Dhoondhmook his wife and his daughter-in-law. Since Dhoondhmook's son was not present in the house at that time he survived. He avenged the death of his family members by killing the assasins. Now Dhoondhmook's son had become disillusioned with life. He started wandering aimlessly and reached a hermitage. The sage who lived in that hermitage was a great devotee of Lord Shiva and taught him the rituals of Pashupat Vrata as well as the sacred Shodakshar mantra. Dhoondhmook's son performed the rituals of Pashupat Vrat for twelve months. All the while he kept on chanting the Shadakshar mantra. As the result of his devotion towards Lord Shiva and by the virtue of chanting Sadakshar mantra he as well as all his ancestors attained salvation.

LORD PASH UP ATI

The sages were curious to know why Lord Shiva was also known as Pashupati (lord of animals). Suta retold the same tale which sage Shiladi

had once narrated to Sanatkumar —

Once, Sanatkumar went to the hermitage of Sage Shiladi and asked him as to why was Lord Shankar also known as Pashupati. He also inquired about the reason of man's ondages and how could he be liberated from them.

Sage Shiladi replied—All the living beings including Lord Brahma have been referred to animals because of their attachment to worldly desires and ignorance. Lord Shiva being the lord of them is also known as Pashupati. It is none other than Lord Vishnu whose illusionary and divine powers keep them in bondages. It is also only lord Vishnu who liberates them by bestowing the knowledge of Jnana Yoga.

Nobody can attain salvation without the blessings of Lord Shiva. The nothing but the 24 elements—10 sense organs, 4 type of consciousness, 5 basic elements from which matter is made and 5 subtle forms of matter. A person who worships Lord Shiva with total devotion becomes liberated because devotion is capable of destroying all types of sins.

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THE MAJESTIC LORD MAHESHWAR

Lord Maheshwar is beyond the reach if any kind of bondage. He is totally liberated entity. It is only by his blessings that the Nature-Prakriti,

creates intelligence—buddhi. Similarly, intelligence creates ego-ahamkara and subtle forms of matter—tanmatra creates the greatest of matter by the blessings of Lord Shiva. No word can describe the greatness of Lord Shiva.lt is only with the permission of Lord Maheshwar that our sense organs function the fire bums and all the living beings fulfill their respective duties. Lord Shiva is the Almighty God and goddess Parvati is also called Shiva. He is the Purusha and she is the nature or Prakriti. The matter derives its power from goddess Gauri. Everything that is capable of creating is nothing but the form of Uma. The whole universe is established in the form of Shivalinga and hence everybody must worship Lord Shiva.

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THE SUN - MANIFESTATION OF SHIVA'S POWER

Lord Shiva manifests himself in the form of Sun. The Sun radiates twelve different types of rays which have specific impacts and influences on the

world.

The first ray is called Amrit and the deities derive their power from it. The second ray is called Chandra and it helps in the preservation of medicinal herbs. The third ray is called Shukla and it helps in the propagation of religiousness in the world. It also helps the food crops to become ripe. The fourth ray is Harikesha and all the constellations get their nourishment from it. The fifth ray is called Vishwakarma and it gives the planet mercury.

The sixth ray is called Sanyadwasu and it nurtures the planet—Mars. The seventh ray is called Arvavasu and it nurtures the planet Jupiter. The eighth ray is called Surat and it nurtures the planet —Saturn. The nineth ray is called Susumana and it nutures the moon.

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SHIVA TATVA

The learned and sages call Shiva by many names — Kshetragya, Prakriti Vyakta, Kalatma etc. The synonyms of Kshetragya and Prakriti are

Purusha and Pradhan respectively.The delusionary net of the Prakriti is known as Vyakta (apparent). Kala (time) is the resultant by product of Pradhan and Vyakta. Some sages call Hiranyagarbha (Brahma) as the Purusha and Shiva as Pradhan. They consider Hiranyagarbha to be the creator and Purusha to be the enjoyer. Even these sages are of the opinion that Hiranyagarbho, Pradhan, Purusha and enjoyer are the manifestations of Shiva.

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THE GREATNESS OF SHIVA

The almighty Shiva manifested in the form of Sthanu (Pillar) from his imperceptible form and looked at Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma then

commenced his creation and established the norms of Varna ashrama. He also created 'Soma' which is required for the performance of 'Yagya'. This world, including all the deities are the embodiments of Soma. The deities eulogize Lord Shiva by chanting the mantras of 'Rudrashtadhyay'.

Once, Lord Shiva was sitting surrounded by all the deities. On being requested by the deities to shed light on his mysterious self, Lord Shiva said—

"I was present before the beginning of time and I will be present forever. Everything originate from me and get submerged in me ultimately. I am the Lord of Brahma. I am the truth itself. I manifest myself in the forms of Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda. I am the light as well as the darkness. I am Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. One who is aware of my omnipresence is the only person who is worthy of being called an enlightened one."

This way, after enlightening the deities on his myssterious self Lord Shiva disappeared.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF GURU

A devotee should commence the worship of Lord Shiva only after taking permission from his Guru, Only such a person is worthy of being called a

Guru who is virtuous and well versed in the scripture.

A disciple should unwavering by be in the service of his Guru and should try to please him by his devotion because only he (Guru) is capable of liberating him from the miseries of world. A guru should try to test the worthiness of his disciple by employing different means for three years. Once, the Guru has accepted a person as his disciple, he should try to impart all the knowledge to him. He should never discriminate on the basic of caste or creed of a disciple. It is the duty of a Guru to make his disciple destitute of flaws and shortcomings.

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THE RITUALS OF INITIATION

Before commencing the rituals of initiation, the Guru should purify the place where the rites are supposed to be performed. He should make an

attar and draw an eight-petalled lotus at its center. He should then establish the various embodiments of Shiva like Aghor, Pranav, Vamadeva, on each of the eight petals. The Guru should then purify all the directions by chanting different mantras. He should then meditate on the form of Lord Shiva. After that he should make offerings in the sacrificial fire and purify himself by doing achaman. He should then have Panchagavya as prasadam and smear ashes on his body.

The Guru should instructed his old disciples to sit towards the south of altar. He should make offerings of ghee into the sacrificial fire for 108 times amidst the chanting of Aghor mantra .The new disciple then arrive blindfolded and circumambulate the sacrificial altar for three times. While circumambulating everybody should chant either the mantras of Rudrashtadhyay or Omkar mantra. The new disciple then smear ashes on their bodies amidst the chanting of Aghor mantra. The Guru then sprinkles holy water on the new disciples. In the end the disciple takes a religious vow. "I shall never have food without worshipping Shiva". This way the ritual of initiation comes to an end.

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INSTALLATION OF SHIVALINGA

Describing about the methods of installing a Shivalinga Suta says— A devotee should install a Shivalinga made of either gold, silver or copper.

The shivalinga should be installed along with the altar. The altar of the Shivalinga symbolizes goddess Uma. Lord Brahma is said to manifest at the base of Shivalinga while Lord Vishnu at its center. After the installment of Shivalinga it should be worshipped with appropriate rituals. The Shivalinga should be adorned with clothes and its ablution should be performed.

A devotee should chant the Brahma vigyan mantras for the consecration of Lord Brahma who is supported to manifest at the base of Shivalinga. Similarly, for the consecration of Lord Vishnu dwelling at the center of Shivalinga, Gayatri at the center of Lord Shiva is consecrated by the chanting of any of the following mantras—

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A devotee should then worship the Shivalinga and make offerings in the sacrificial fire.

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VAJRESHWARI VIDYA

The sages requested Suta to elaborate upon the rituals of Vajravahanika Vidya or Vajreshwari Vidya. Suta replied— Anybody who is desirous of

vanquishing his enemy must perform the rituals of Vajreshwari Vidya. The devotee should worship Vajra (a spear) and make offerings in the sacrificial fire holding it (Vajra) in his hand. The following mantra should be chanted while making offerings.

OM BHURBHUVAH SWAH TATSAVITUR VARENYAM BHARGO DEVASYA DHIMAHI DHIYO YONAH PRACHODAYAT;

OM PHAT JAHIHOOM PHAT CHHINDHIMINDHIJAHI HAN HAN SWAHA.

In the past Lord Brahma had taught this secret Vidya to Indra with the help of which he had killed the ferocious demon Vritrasur. A man can acquire all the types of supernatural powers with the help of Vajreshwari Vidya. Describing about the rituals of Mrityunjay Japa, Suta said— A person who chants Mrityunjay mantra with appropriate rituals becomes free from the fear of death. A devotee is required to make offerings of ghee in the sacrificial fire for one lakh times. Instead of ghee he can also make offerings of ghee and sesame seeds or dhoob grass, ghee, milk and honey.

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DIFFERENT TYPES OF YOGA

The sages asked Suta as to how should a devotee meditate on Lord Triyambak following the path of Yoga. Suta then retold the tale which

Mandishwar had once narrated to Sanatkumar—

1. The first type of Yoga is called Mantra Yoga. In this type of yoga a devotee tries to attain deep state of meditation by chanting mantras. The chanting of mantras helps a man to concentrate his mind.

2. The second type of Yoga is known as Sparsh Yoga. In this type of yoga, a man acquires perfection in breath-control by constantly practicing various exercises like Rechak (exhalation), Kumbhak (retention), etc. These exercises help to purify the nerves and blood vessels.

3. The third type of yoga is known as Bhava Yoga. This is the state in which a person's mind is totally engrossed in the thoughts of Lord Mahadeva. This state of mind can not be attained unless the two former types of yoga have been mastered.

4. The fourth type of Yoga is called Abhava-yoga. When a man has mastered this particular yoga his ego is subdued in totality.

5. The fifth type of yoga is called Maha yoga. It helps a man to understand his real self and get united with the supreme Almighty. The secret of Yoga should be revealed to worthy disciples— who are virtuous and religious."

This way, Suta described the divine tales of Linga Purana and blessed the sages. The Linga Purana contains eleven thousand shlokas in it. The study of Linga Purana fulfills all the four worldly aspirations of a man-Dharma, Artha, Kam and Moksha.lt also helps a man to attain salvation.

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